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- *Ctrl+I* adds *italic* formatting and *Ctrl+B* adds bold formatting.
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YN Interview

IR: Tell me the types of digital devices you are familiar with and how often you use them.

YN: To be honest, I only have this smartphone this one right here. And this one as you know I use it in my everyday life.

IR: Good, Which features, software, or applications do you use your mobile phone for?

YN: I use my phone for everything, to connect it with my people. You know there are also the likes of Telegram and WhatsApp that I use to talk with my people. I also use it for Facebook and Youtube. Other things I use my phone for banking even though I must admit I am not a good user when it comes

to it. I am also a big user of sports betting and I use my phone for that as well. Many things.

IR: Do you also use your phone for emails and video conferencing tools like Zoom?

YN: To be honest my brother Mihretab, apart from the things I told you earlier I am not much user of the internet or other phone services.

IR: So far how was the integration process for you? What does integration mean for you?

YN: I think when you say integration it could mean a lot of things. For example, for me, if you accept the country as yours and enjoy living here, and also at the same time if you get accepted by the people here, I can call that integration. And if you ask me how integration is going on with me, to be honest with you it is very tough. First, there is the language problem, I only speak Tigrinya. So, here if you can't speak Dutch and or English especially Dutch it is very challenging. So for me, that is how I understand integration, I hope to have answered your question.

IR: Of course, How do you use digital technologies in your everyday life? Have digital skills played a role in your integration process? If so, can you elaborate on how?

YN: In my everyday life as I tried to tell you earlier I use my phone in so many different ways. It can be at work, or trying to talk with your family, friends, and other people. In addition to that, whenever you have something with the municipality or IND the internet comes in and you have to use it or go through it. In the process of integration, I think it helped me in a little way. You know what Mihretab brother, sometimes I wish I had mastered the computer or the phone. If I was good with computers and had some skills the whole thing of integrating here might have been a little bit easier. However, to be honest, and you know it yourself I have never seen a computer before. I didn't have the chance to learn that as a child. Even a phone I only had access to it after I left Eritrea. That's why I sometimes wish I had those skills. So, it is difficult for me to say that it helped me integrate Mihretab brother.

IR: Good, Do you feel that digital technologies have helped or hindered your integration into Dutch society? Can you provide specific examples?

YN: Speaking from my situation, the thing that I have not enough digital skills or the ability to use the digital technologies of this time I feel like it hindered me. Because, some things that I should be doing or things that I have to do I can't do them because of this. Once upon a time when I was new in this country, in the first few months, I had an appointment at one organization. I had an email address, but I didn't know how to use it

someone set it up for me back then. And in one form I filled my email address. Later on they sent the appointment to my email address. I was just waiting someone would tell me or notify me about it as I Didn't know how to use email. I had no idea about it. Because of that I failed to go to my appointment. It was for a housing arrangement by the way. And I missed my opportunity then just because of that. Therefore, in order to communicate with different organizations, in order to get information, make an appointment and so on it is very important.

IR: That is a good example, thank you for sharing: How do you currently use digital technologies to access information about your rights and obligations as a refugee in the Netherlands?

YN: About these issues, you know. There are many parties working with refugees including the IND. And presently they use the internet and websites to share all relevant information about your rights and responsibilities. So you have to be able to use the internet to stay updated about every thing. But when I say internet use it has to be a good understanding and skill. The good thing is that there are Facebook and WhatsApp groups, you join there and helps you get this kind of information easily. However, I don't have the knowledge to go to a website and see for myself. I only see it if it is in Facebook and Telegram came across it there. That is easier for me.

IR: Now, Have you used any digital tools or resources to learn Dutch or other languages? How effective have these been?

YN: Well, people nowadays say if you want to learn everything is available on the Internet. Yes, that is right, but I would like to ask these people whether everyone knows how to use the Internet. Do you understand? As a young person, there are certain things people expect from you. People talk about globalization, that everything is interconnected through globalization, that everything is becoming one. Everything is available on the internet and that is true. As I told you earlier, I only use my phone. So, using my phone I am able to learn on YouTube, Facebook and so on. However, if I were good at computers, if I had the skills to go and seek information on websites that would have been very helpful. So when learning the Nederland language I was watching YouTube videos and other videos just in my phone.

IR: Have you encountered any challenges using digital technologies in the Netherlands, such as language barriers or lack of access to technology? How have you overcome these challenges, if at all?

YN: Wow Mihretab brother, the first challenging thing is the language. Sometimes I think to myself, what if all the websites were in Tigrinya, all the applications and everything? Everything would have been so much easier. Here internet resources are in Dutch and English, reading in Dutch is another challenge by itself. Especially at the beginning. I took Dutch

language course but I don't speak English. Another thing is personally I do not have a computer, I could have bought one but I didn't.

IR: Do you use any online platforms or apps to connect with other refugees or people from your home country? How has this affected your sense of community and belonging in the Netherlands?

YN: Yes absolutely, I use Messenger, WhatsApp, IMO, Telegram like I said earlier. The connection here is mainly with people from my country. Other refugees like me from my country. Adapting to a new country is challenging in itself. But being able to connect with people using these devices makes you feel like you are at home here. Especially when you use video calls.

IR: Have you had the opportunity to interact with Dutch people or participate in Dutch social events? Have you used any digital tools or platforms to connect with Dutch people or participate in Dutch social events?

YN: Here to be honest Mihretab brother, I don't have any connection with Dutch people. Except for my case worker and social workers in the way, I don't acquaint with Dutch people and I can't answer your question.

IR: No problem, Have you been able to find employment since arriving in the Netherlands? If not, what are the challenges you face in finding a job?

YN: Well, I started working very recently about 7 or 8 months ago. Before that, I used to work but in the black market short-term jobs. The challenges in finding employment are, at first it was primarily the language challenge. It is very difficult to find work if you don't speak either Dutch or English. So that was difficult. So, people from our country prefer to just work informally like what I told you.

IR: Have you used any online platforms or resources to search for job opportunities?

YN: No, none. Except if it is something shared by a friend on Facebook. Does that count? If not I used none. I found the current job, prior to my start there was this Eritrean friend who was working there. So, when he left the job he connected me with the owners and I started working. So, they said there are opportunities using the internet but that is not for me.

IR: Have you received any support or training to develop digital skills related to job search or job performance?

YN: They share information and give you some orientation via the municipality. Except for that I personally have not received or known of any digital-oriented or job-related digital skills training.

IR: Have you faced any challenges in accessing basic services such as healthcare, education, or housing in the Netherlands?

YN: When it comes to accessing health services, thank God a lot of things are good here. With regard to education, I think there are opportunities for those with previous education who want to go further. It is up to you mostly. The most challenging I would say is housing. First, we had to stay in camps, switching between different camps actually. There were also problems waiting until they find housing for you even long after you get refugee status. In my case, I faced extra challenges because of my lack of skill to use email as I told you earlier. They sent me an email, and I don't know how to use email, I only had the email address but didn't know how to use that. They sent the email and I missed the opportunity to have the housing arranged earlier. I had to wait again afterward because of that.

IR: Have you used any digital tools or resources to help you navigate the Dutch system and access these services?

YN: In all the services, the social services there are applications like health insurance. I personally am not good at using these technologies, so my friends help me whenever I need them. I prefer to make phone calls and arrange whatever it is I want to do. That way it is easier. They will tell me to go to the Internet and fill out a form which I can't do. They will tell me to go online and read something but I can't. That's why I directly call them. Even



that is a technology by itself, right? But now since I am also getting better with the language that is what I prefer. You understand me right?

IR: Yes I understand. Do you feel that digital skills are important in accessing basic services in the Netherlands?

YN: Wow absolutely, no doubt about it. Let me tell you this brother, in this country almost everything is online. The market is online, food is online, the bank is online, shopping is online, and utilities like water and electricity are online. Therefore it is very very important.

IR: Have you had any opportunities to attend digital skills training programs or workshops in the Netherlands? If so, can you describe your experience and how it has benefited you?

YN: It is as I told you earlier Mihretab brother. I received a Dutch language course, but I haven't received nor searched for digital skills or digital technology courses.

IR: What are some of the main challenges you have faced in accessing digital skills training or educational resources in the Netherlands?

YN: The thing is there are none, I haven't come across such training. I don't know if I might have missed them, but as far as I know, there are digital

skills training for refugees. I wish I had an opportunity to have attended such training, I really do. But I found none.

IR: Are there any specific digital skills or areas of knowledge that you feel would be particularly valuable for your integration into Dutch society? Why?

YN: This is a difficult question if I have to choose a specific thing that is very important. I would say the ability to go to a certain website on the internet, search for something, find information, and complete something that concerns you. If a person is able to do this, I think his life here would have been much much easier. Because all organizations would ask you to go to their website, read something there or do something.

IR: What kind of support or resources do you think would be beneficial in helping refugees like yourself in the Netherlands improve their digital skills and enhance their integration?

YN: As to me, trainings are very important. For example, language is a mandatory course for refugees. It is mandatory, yes of course language is fundamental and it helps you a lot. We are talking about integration and that is one of the most important things. However, along with the language courses digital training should also be provided as a mandatory. I would have loved that. Especially for us, you know the situation in our country. It would have been a great deal for us. Otherwise, there is no room for

growth and for improvement. Do you understand? You will be bound to do the same lower jobs forever. There won't be improvements in your life. Therefore, if the government can make digital training and make that mandatory, that would be great.

IR: Is there anything else you would like to add or share about your experience with digital skills and integration?

YN: No, I only want to thank you so much for this opportunity. I hope this research will be valuable help to others.

YN: It would have been great if the government can provide training and maybe computers for refugees.